

REMARKS

Status of Claims

Claims 1 and 6-10 are pending, of which claims 1 and 6 are independent. Claims 1 and 6 have been amended. Support for the amendments is found, for example, Examples 1-6 of the specification. Claims 11-12 have been cancelled without prejudice. No new matter has been entered.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 1, 6 and 9-12 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Schmidt et al. (USP 5,590,387) in view of Moritz ("Preparation of super soft granulate from nanosized ceramic powders by spray freezing," *Journal of Nanoparticle Research*, Vol. 4 (2002), pp. 439-448) and Sommer ("Size Enlargement," Ullmann's Encyclopedia of Industrial Chemistry (June 15, 2000), pp. 1-15 and 37-40). Claims 7-8 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Schmidt in view of Moritz and Sommer as applied to claims 1, 6, and 12 above, in further view of Bouaricha (US Pub. 2004/0208775). Applicants respectfully traverse these rejections for at least the following reasons.

Applicants respectfully submit that none of the cited references disclose or even suggest the metal particles being composed of a metal selected from the group consisting of Ag, Au and an alloy of each of Ag and Au, as recited by amended claims 1 and 6. The Examples of the present application describe that the metal particles are composed of noble metals, such as silver, gold, or alloy of silver or gold, which are resistant to oxidation. Therefore, if the particle size of the noble metal is reduced to nanometer level, the particles tend to agglomerate after drying because the surface of the particles is in a bare condition (not being covered by oxide). Once the

agglomeration is formed in noble metal particles, it is difficult to redisperse the agglomeration. However, controlling parameters such as water content, apparent density and organic compound in accordance with the present application make redispersion of the particles possible.

On the other hand, Schmidt discloses nano- or micro-disperse metal such as base metal (B, Al, Ai, Ti, Zr, Hf, Bb, Ta, Cr, Mo, W, La, Y, Fe, Co, or Ni) or ceramic powders (see, col. 5, lines 1-6 of Schmidt). As the metal or ceramic powders of the Schmidt are not in a bare condition, nanosize particles are hard to form intensive agglomeration and easy to redisperse even if parameters such as water content and apparent density are not controlled. In other words, while the present application is directed to the use of noble metals (Ag and Au) that are easy to be agglomerated in nanosize particles, Schmidt uses base metal or ceramic powders. Levels of difficulty for the redispersion are different between the present application and Schmidt because of the difference in kind of metals comprised in the metal particles.

Moritz also describes ceramic powder (see, for example, the title of Mortiz) and fails to disclose the use of Ag and Au. Further, Sommer also fails to disclose the use of noble metals including Ag and Au. Furthermore, Bouaricha does not mention the use of Ag and Au.

As such, it is clear that none of the cited references, taken alone or in combination thereof, render claims 1 and 6 or any claim dependent thereon obvious. Thus, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner withdraw the rejection of claims 1 and 6-10.

CONCLUSION

Having fully responded to all matters raised in the Office Action, Applicants submit that all claims are in condition for allowance, an indication for which is respectfully solicited. If there are any outstanding issues that might be resolved by an interview or an Examiner's amendment, the Examiner is requested to call Applicants' attorney at the telephone number shown below.

To the extent necessary, a petition for an extension of time under 37 C.F.R. 1.136 is hereby made. Please charge any shortage in fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, to Deposit Account 500417 and please credit any excess fees to such deposit account.

Respectfully submitted,

McDERMOTT WILL & EMERY LLP



Takashi Saito
Limited Recognition No. L0123

600 13th Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20005-3096
Phone: 202.756.8000 BKS:TS:
Facsimile: 202.756.8087
Date: February 18, 2009

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